

First Congregational Church of Austin  
(now Our Lady of Lebanon-Roman Catholic Church)  
5701 West Midway Park  
(southwest corner of West Midway  
Park and North Waller Street)  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1067

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
68-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawing*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
801 - 19th Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AUSTIN  
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Location: 5701 West Midway Park (southwest corner of West Midway Park and North Waller Street), Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner and Use: Catholic Bishop of Chicago; Roman Catholic Church.

Statement of Significance: This small Prairie School church was designed by William E. Drummond in 1908 for the west-side community of Austin, then a suburb of Chicago. Drummond served as Frank Lloyd Wright's head draughtsman during the first decade of the century; his stylistic debt to Wright is evident in the church design, which is related to Wright's earlier designs for Unity Temple and the Larkin Administration Building. Yet, the low basilican church is an original work in its own right, with a low entrance set between massive brick piers, a clerestory lighted by a large skylight with lower side-aisles, and fine brickwork and leaded glass. In 1961 the building was named a Chicago Architectural Landmark.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: North 154' of lot 432 and east 8- $\frac{1}{2}$ ' of north 154' of lot 431 in Austin's Resubdivision of Block 9 in that part of Austinville lying in the east half of the northeast quarter section 8-39-13; recorded September 20, 1880.

Following is an abstract of the complete chain of title contained in Book 113A, pp. 319-21, 369, 460, 505 in the Cook County Recorder's Office: The property was purchased from Henry W. Austin et al. by the First Congregational Church in Austin on October 19, 1897 (Documents 2603275-6) and was retained by them until January 15, 1926, when the Chicago Conference Association of the Seventh Day Adventists took over the church (Document 9151828). From this point on, the title is not clear; Carl W. Condit, The Chicago School of Architecture (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), includes a recent photograph of the church with the name "West Central Church" over the door. On November 5, 1958, the Catholic Bishop of Chicago received the property from Walter R. Lemke (Document 17366276).

2. Date of erection: 1908-1909.
3. Architect: William E. Drummond (1876-1948).

B. Bibliography:

Brooks, H. Allen, Jr. The Prairie School, The American Spirit in Midwest Residential Architecture, 1893-1916. Evanston, Illinois: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation for the Department of Art, Northwestern University, 1957. pp. 147-156. Pl. 130.

Condit, Carl W. The Chicago School of Architecture. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964. pp. 209-10; pl. 173.

Prairie School Review. Vol. I, No. 2 (1964).

The entire issue is devoted to the work of the architectural firm of Guenzel and Drummond with special mention of the First Congregational Church of Austin on pages 6 and 21.

Siegel, Arthur (ed.). Chicago's Famous Buildings. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963. pp. 150-51. Plan.

"The Work of Guenzel and Drummond," The Western Architect. Vol. 21, No. 2 (February 1915). pp. 11-15; figs. 1-20. Plate 6, exterior and interior views; Plate 8, plan.  
Article by William Drummond entitled "On Things of Common Concern."

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka  
Historian and  
Assistant Supervisor  
National Park Service  
August 1965

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An excellent example of "Prairie School" architecture in the ecclesiastical field, composed of rectangular masses, emphasized horizontally by brick courses. The result is a strong and serene unity.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Interior:

1. Layout, number of stories: Rectangular; two stories.

2. Wall construction: Buff colored roman brick with deeply raked horizontal mortar joints and very thin flush vertical mortar joints. Projecting horizontal concrete base, parapet cap, string course above entrance.
3. Structural system, framing: Masonry bearing walls with heavy timber framing (mill construction).
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: Horizontal masonry bulkheads over entrance with concrete string course at top and bottom. Originally, had a planter in top which trailed vines down the side of the bulkhead.
5. Chimneys: Two small brick chimneys penetrate above roof line on east and west sides just south of main east and west walls with sash which open into low side aisles of nave.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The north (front) entrance is at the center of the north front; the two doors (not original) are flanked by brick planters and simple brick piers with concrete coping. The rear entrance is original, now opening into a rectory added to the south.
  - b. Windows and shutters: All windows are multi-colored, geometrically designed, leaded glass units.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Flat roof with asphalt covering (hipped roof over main sanctuary; high roof which contains skylight).
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Concrete coping caps the top of all walls.
  - c. Skylights: There is a large, rectangular, leaded-glass skylight over nave. Small, square leaded-glass skylights light the two north stairwells and two rear sacristy rooms on either side of the chancel area. The geometric design of these skylights is similar to that of the other windows of the building.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Ground floor; large meeting room with borrowed lights opening to narthex, which is five steps above main

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lower floor. Rest rooms are under stairs at two north corners of building. Kitchen area at rear of main room. Storage room adjacent to kitchen on east. Mechanical equipment room adjacent to kitchen on west. Storage alcoves under windows on west and east walls of main room between brick piers.

Main floor; large sanctuary reached by stairs (northeast and northwest corners of building) from narthex. Sacristy and prep. room now located in southeast and southwest corners of building where pastor's study and choir room respectively were originally located. Chancel area and railing have been modified from original.

2. Stairways: Two major stairs in northeast and northwest corners of building, leading from entrance narthex to main sanctuary level. Skylight above these areas. These staircases are expressed at the northeast and northwest corners of the building as brick cubes capped with concrete horizontal capstone. Secondary stair in southwest corner of building from basement into original choir room. All stairs are open.
3. Flooring: All floor covering is now asphalt tile. Originally, there was concrete in the lower area and entrance level, with 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ " oak strip flooring on main sanctuary level.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Main supporting structural members and area below windows on main sanctuary level are buff roman brick (now painted). Remaining surfaces are plaster. Walls and ceiling in lower level are plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: All doorways are oak (originally dark stain). Some have since been painted over. Doors from entrance level to stair landing, and entrance level to lower level have large single center pane of glass with 5" stiles and top rail, and 8" bottom rail. All other doors have similar stiles, rails and trim with solid panel except 2 new mahogany flush panel doors into rooms each side of chancel, and doors into storage alcoves between piers in basement which are flush panel with 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ " trim strip top and sides and 15" trim strip on bottom.
6. Decorative features and trim: 8- $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 8- $\frac{1}{2}$ " dark stained oak is dropped trim surrounding skylight in sanctuary. Numerous trim strips on walls to enframe panel surfaces. Glass borrowed light with dark stained oak frame and trim between entrance narthex and lower level. Three floor to ceiling strips are separated by brick piers.

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7. Notable Hardware: All existing hardware still remaining is very simple and rectilinear in design with no relief.
8. Lighting: Original fixtures were single, white, translucent globes. These have been replaced by brass fixtures with four reflectors. All fixtures are incandescent.
9. Heating: A central heating system with perimeter supply through the ducts. At the main sanctuary level these perimeter ducts were in the wall below the windows. The supply from the duct into the room is through a grill work of alternating open joints and face brick of the same used in the walls in this area. A fireplace is located on the lower level at the south end of the building.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The church faces north in a single-family residential area, similar to the area (north) across the street (except for another church directly north). To the east is a multiple-family residential area, while to the south is a commercial district. A rectory has been added to the church on the south (rear) which is entered from the east.
2. Landscaping: Large trees are numerous in the area, but there are few on the site, as the church occupies most of its lot. There are sidewalks on the north and on the east side of the church.

Prepared by J. William Rudd  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
June 1965